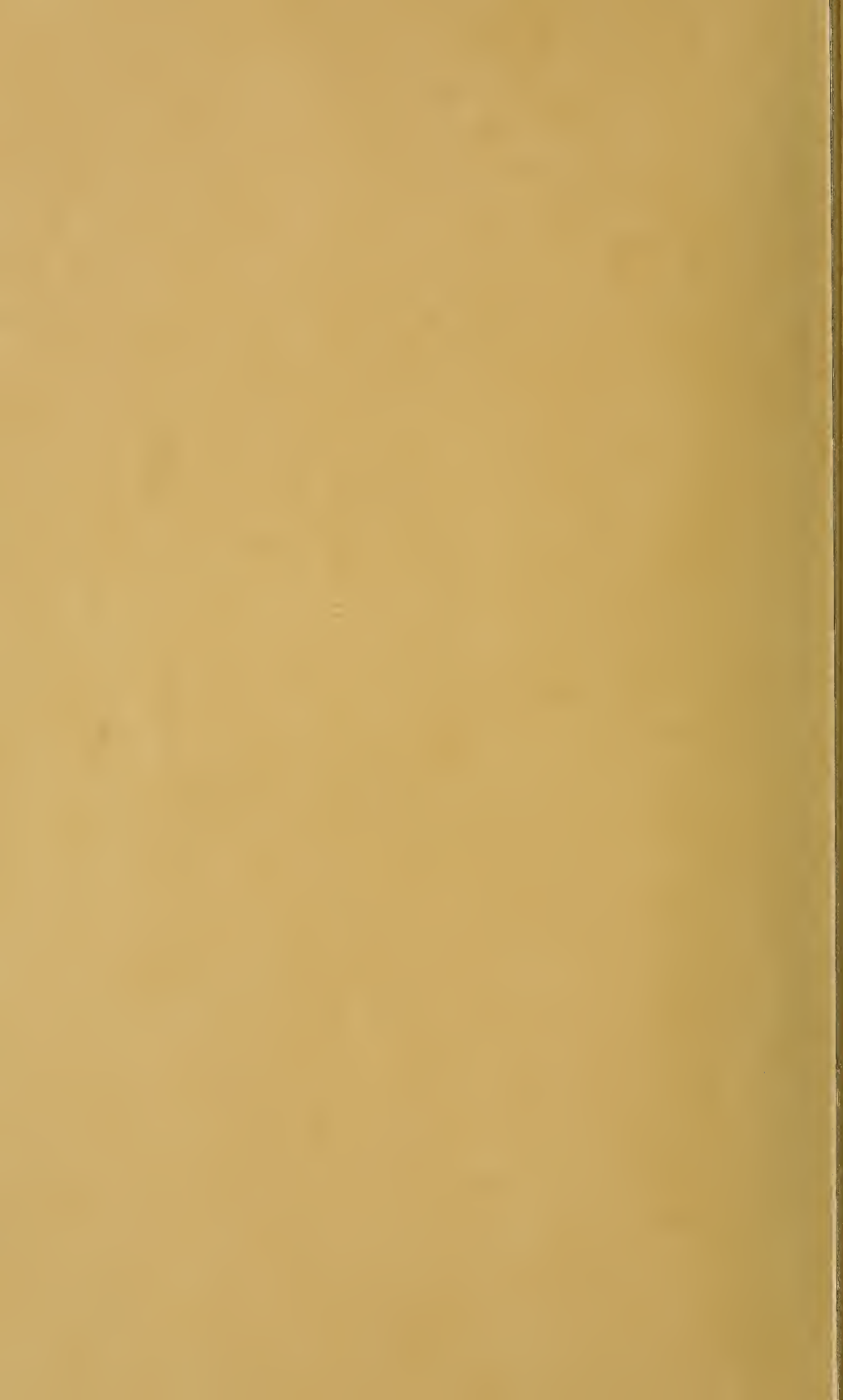


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ADDRESS
OF THE
VICE PRESIDENT OF THE
UNITED STATES

DELIVERED AT A MEETING OF THE
SUPREME COUNCIL OF SCOTTISH RITE MASONS
FOR THE NORTHERN JURISDICTION OF THE UNITED
STATES HELD IN NEW YORK CITY, ON
SEPTEMBER 17, 1917

Thomas D. Swanson



PRESENTED BY MR. SWANSON
SEPTEMBER 22, 1917.—Ordered to be printed

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ADDRESS DELIVERED BY THE VICE PRESIDENT OF THE
UNITED STATES BEFORE THE SUPREME COUNCIL OF
SCOTTISH RITE MASONS FOR THE NORTHERN JURISDICTION
OF THE UNITED STATES, HELD IN NEW YORK CITY,
ON MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 1917.

SOVEREIGN GRAND COMMANDER AND BRETHREN:

These are days when he who is uncertain as to whether what he is about to say will help or harm his country's cause would better remain silent.

These are hours when the ordinarily thoughtful man is looking backward, looking forward, looking around, and looking within.

He wants to know the history of his country; to diagnose present conditions; to determine, if possible, the future, and his part in this world tragedy. He beholds in retrospect almost a century and a half of unexampled progress and prosperity, and reverently lifting his eyes to the God of Nations, exclaims with the Psalmist of old, "He hath not dealt so with any nation."

He searches his dictionary for a word that will express the dominant feature of these glorious years. He reaches the conclusion that America in all these decades has spelt, at home and abroad, more clearly than any other the word "Opportunity."

He observes that America has not been exclusively a land where only men thoroughly imbued with the principles upon which it was founded might build for themselves homes. Isolated from the beginning by countless leagues of sea, it was never dreamed that it could become involved in the politics and policies of Europe. This isolation led the rulers to throw its gates open to all who might care to enter. These came in unnumbered thousands and for reasons, oftentimes, remote from those purely of government—some to advance their fortune and some their social standing; others to divorce themselves from distressful conditions—social, economic, political, or religious.

It was not thought necessary to require the use of the official language in family and social life. We rather discouraged than encouraged the use of English. In many States we provided for the teaching of the home language in the public schools.

So thoughtless and indifferent were we to the shrinking of the ocean by steam and electricity that we rejoiced to observe everywhere business being conducted and social energies evinced under the hyphenations of British-American, Irish-American, German-American, Franco-American, and Italo-American.

We took no trouble to protest against dual citizenship. We permitted foreign-born citizens to vote, with full knowledge of their right—which meant our consent—that whenever they chose to do so they could repudiate their American citizenship by appearing before a consul of their native land and become alien enemies.

All this and more because we never dreamed of European complications. We had but few whom we were pleased to denominate just plain, old-fashioned, American citizens. Within my knowledge, learned and patriotic Senators have debated with zeal whether it was American or Irish or German citizens who won for us our freedom in the Revolution.

Now, no one ever doubted the loyalty to the flag of all these people whether foreign-born or the sons of foreign-born. Our isolation made it immaterial to us whether there was any difference between loyalty and patriotism, and true to a thousand years of tradition, we did not face the question until it became of moment.

The years drew us closer and closer to Europe in the ties of commerce and the friendly relations of travel. More and more we became a part of the world; and suddenly a mad monarch, drunk with military power and crazed with the idea that he was divinely ordained to rule the world, plunged Europe into a war so awful that all wars which had preceded it paled into insignificance.

Still we stood by our ancient ideas of isolation, but in two years and a half we discovered that there was a vast difference between loyalty and patriotism. The hearts of men flamed up very largely in response to the blood that flowed in their veins. Patriotism showed itself as dependent, not upon place of residence nor political ideas, but rather upon heredity.

Patience at last was exhausted, and there was nothing for a self-respecting people to do, if their Republic was to be true to its traditions, save to engage in the war on the side of democracy.

I do not care to engage in any hair-splitting, although there seems to be much discussion as to whether this war is being waged "to make the world safe for democracy" or "to make democracy safe for the world." Of course, it was meant by the President, when he spoke of making "the world safe for democracy," of making it safe for real democracy.

We all know that liberty is not license, nor democracy demagoguery. We all know that the world can not be made safe for murder and arson and pillage and anarchy and everything for which the syndicalist and the I. W. W.'s may stand; and we also know that such things as these can not be made safe for the world.

I do not stop to speak of the tradition, the history, and the duties of our own fraternity. There are three great forces, aside from arms and armament, which are molding the future as they have shaped the past. These are the teachings of the Nazarene, the tenets of our fraternity, and the tendency of democracy as disclosed in the ideas and ideals of the Republic.

When rulers and people are willing to do as they would be done by, when they are willing to meet upon the level, act by the plumb, and part upon the square; and when governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed, then there will be a large assurance of permanent peace.

This can be brought about only by an appeal to the conscience. To do so, discussion is needful. Free thought must never be hampered. But because a man thinks a thing to be true, and has a right to utter his belief under a democracy, he is not justified, if he believes in God, in brotherhood, and in the Republic, in voicing his views under all circumstances.

There are many of us who should accept Paul's advice to the Corinthians: "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient."

Democracy means the rule of the people under whatever form of government they may choose to express it, but when once the rule of the people has been expressed, through their chosen representatives, then—and particularly in the hour of war—however much any of us may think that certain of the policies are mistaken policies, free speech, free press, and liberty of conscience do not justify criticism, for criticism, however unintentional, invariably gives aid and comfort to the enemy.

Conscription as a principle may be a subject of debate, but not now. This Democracy has adopted it for the purposes of this war, and discussion of it ought to be held in abeyance. This Government, by its chosen Representatives, has declared this war. If there be any who think it is not justified, let him not be of aid and comfort to the enemy by voicing his sentiments. If laws are silent in the midst of arms, let all discussion as to the rightfulness or wrongfulness of the war, and as to the methods by which it is being prosecuted cease, unless by discussion the cause of the Republic and of human liberty can be advanced.

Democracy is constructive, not destructive; it is advisory, not critical. I would not have it understood that it is our duty to walk over the dead bodies of our convictions even to attain success. I admit that failure with honor is preferable to success with disgrace; but, believing as I do in the justice and necessity of our cause, I beg my brothers of this most loyal order when they speak, to speak wholeheartedly for the cause in which we are engaged, and not to criticize until mature thought and consideration have convinced them that by criticism they can advance the cause of our country and of universal democracy.

I do not speak of your duty to the Flag, nor of duty at all. I know duty is with us always; that it rises with us in the morning, sits down with us at the breakfast table, goes with us to shop and field and office; that it is the very shadow of ourselves, and the governor which keeps the engine of life moving smoothly.

I would have all men with us in this cause from a sense of duty, if for no other reason, but I would preferably have all enter into it from a higher sense, that of living sacrifice for generations yet unborn.

And now, in the wilderness of thought and of words and in the darkness and desolation of this hour, eyes are being turned to the sunlight of a new day, and we are asking ourselves, "What of the morrow?" "Is America to continue to be the land of opportunity?" To this we all answer fervently, "Yes;" but to the question, "Is America to be exclusively the land of opportunity?" many of us answer, "No." America must be more than the land of opportunity. It must also be the land of obligation, for if the sun break above the cloud tempest and the battle din of this war upon a land exclusively of opportunity, then we shall have a people who may be loyal to the material interests of the Republic, but whose inner sentiments may be disloyal to its ideals.

Common gratitude to the fathers and savers of the Republic demand that we pour out the last drop of blood and expend the last dollar of money in the cause in which we have engaged. This, loyalty

demands; but objectives in crucial hours assume new forms. Martin Luther thought he died a loyal Catholic; instead he died the founder of a new church. Abraham Lincoln thought he was called to the presidency to preserve the Union; instead he died the emancipator of the black man.

Whatever the original causes of this war and whatever the motives in its earlier prosecution may have been, they have now resolved themselves into a conflict between the two great systems of government—autocracy and democracy.

If, therefore, America is to remain just the land of opportunity, then nothing of any moment will have been accomplished by this war, so far as we are concerned. What, therefore, is the lesson of the hour to a body of men whose obligation is to the flag of their country? I dare not speak for you. I speak only for myself, and yet I would that it might be for you also. That lesson is, that this war shall furnish a new definition of patriotism. The word shall no longer mean the land of a man's birth, or the land of his adoption, the language he speaks, or the place where those he loves reside. It shall have evolved into a different meaning. It will demand of everyone who owes allegiance to any prince, or potentate, or autocratic power on earth, that he renounce that allegiance, and renounce also allegiance to every purely selfish pursuit and aim; that he subordinate the material interests of this Government to its ideals; that he take an oath of allegiance to an invisible government which believes, which teaches, which holds that all men are born free and equal, that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed, that none is fit to rule save of the free and untrammelled consent of the majority of those over whom he rules, that wealth is good and honor is better, but above all, that democracy is best. Whoever believes these things is worthy to be an American; whoever does not, is unworthy.

The world around, a free expression of opinion would show a majority of the people to be for the right and not for the wrong; for justice, not for injustice; for honesty, not for dishonesty; for peace not for war, and that given the opportunity, the people will speak for the arbitration of courts, rather than for the arbitrament of arms.

To these old ideas, reborn in the travail of war, I pledge my fealty. I want this war to end, but not to end until the people in every land shall possess the right to make peace and declare war, either directly or through their chosen representatives. I want blood, and birth, and social standing, and educational qualifications, and religious trend all to be forgotten in this new parliament of new men, this federation of the world. I want those in this our land who do not thus believe to become fewer and fewer as the days go by.

I do not want entangling alliances with European nations. It is not necessary to have them. When we sit at the council table of the world, I trust we may do so as the representative of a newer and better isolation—an isolation of the spirit, free to say to the Germanic people, "Have what Government you please, but let us know that it is yours;" free to say to the oldest of constitutional governments, the British Empire, "We have made this fight with you as our ally in the cause of democracy, but we are not willing to change our system. The Windsor tie does not harmonize with the cut of our democracy."

In other words, I want to be in the world to voice a view, to uphold a theory, but never to be compelled to do a wrong unless unfortunately it be for my own country.

This seems to me but to express lamely the views of the President of the United States. If this were a Democratic war, I should keep silent; if it were a Republican war, I probably should say unjustifiable things. It is neither. It is an American war, for only a coward, a poltroon, a trickster, or a political charlatan, seeking personal advantage, would have dared to evade it.

The flag can not wave with terror to its enemies save in the hands of a standard bearer. What you and I may think of the domestic views of the standard bearer can afford to wait. Forgetting blood and business, there are now, as always, just two grades of citizens in the Republic—the man who asks himself, “What can I do for my country?” and the man who asks, “What can my country do for me?”

So long as America was simply the land of opportunity I had much to say about these two classes and the unjustifiable advantages which were afforded to the latter. But now that we have become the land of obligation my voice is silent for the present. I await the conduct of my fellowmen, as I trust they will await mine, if mine be of any moment. So far as mere partisan debts are concerned, I have declared a moratorium until the war ends.

Rich and poor, high and low, labor and capital, protected and unprotected, all are forgotten. What they have, what they do, is of no moment if they be willing to sacrifice for the Republic and for democracy.

I am hoping to see revised one of Macauley's lays of ancient Rome, in which it can truly be said that none is for the party, but all for the state. I have already seen so much splendid self-sacrifice upon the part of men whom I have freely criticised heretofore that I stand dumb and speechless in the presence of mere partisan politics, and dare to lift my voice only in the hope that there may be in it one clear call of loyalty and devotion to the principles in which we pretend to believe, and to the man who is our spokesman.

It was the custom, upon the crowning of a Roman emperor, for the legions to pass in review before him. As each legion appeared it halted and the commander took a solemn obligation to be loyal to the emperor and to the gods of Rome. As he concluded, each man in the legion lifted his good right hand to Heaven, crying out “This for me.” This solemn ceremonial was enacted alike at the crowning of Marcus Aurelius, seeker after God, and of Nero, finder of the devil. The man was nothing, the office all.

Democracy in its partisan sense, Republicanism, Socialism, are just now in abeyance. The chosen representatives of the American people, regardless of their partisan views upon internal matters, have taken their oath of loyalty and devotion to the principles of the Republic, and to the President of the United States. Is it not possible to have until the conclusion of this war all hands in America lifted to the God of our fathers, and all voices proclaiming, “Woodrow Wilson, America, democracy, for me?”

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